

# Off Leash Facility Design and Program Guidelines

Kansas City, Missouri



FINAL Report  
January 19, 2010





Kansas City, Missouri Parks and Recreation  
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## HISTORY

As a legislative response to a community group request to add an off-leash dog area to a neighborhood park, a task force was appointed by the Mayor and City Council in the fall of 2007 to study a variety of approaches to including dog park amenities into the KCMO Parks and Recreation offerings, city-wide. The task force issued its report and made recommendations to the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners in July of 2009. The Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners directed staff to evaluate the recommendations and articulate a response. Staff issued recommendations in August 2009, and then followed them up with a series of public meetings to hear from the community on the staff recommendations. It was the further direction of the Board to have a recommendation for an initial slate of dog parks, including one for each district and one for the downtown area.

## PROCESS

Public meetings, in an open house format, were held weekly from early October to mid-November 2009. Each Councilmanic district hosted a meeting in order to receive input on the proposed dog park locations within that district. An additional hearing was held downtown to consider an off leash area intended to serve area residents. Staff provided the following information at each meeting:

1. Aerial maps showing the specific off-leash location within each recommended park.
2. Information concerning the amenities that would be made available for the proposed park.
3. Copies of the proposed rules.
4. Copies of the Off Leash Facility and Design Program Guidelines, as proposed by Parks and Recreation Staff.
5. City-wide maps showing the location of the proposed parks in relation to the entire park system.
6. Pictures of amenities from Penn Valley dog park and other area parks commonly associated with the dog parks, including sample fencing, benches, shelters and landscaping.
7. Also, the proposed locations for each site were marked off in the parks and left for public examination for several days before the meetings occurred.

Parks staff and some Board members were in attendance at each hearing to answer questions and address concerns, on a one-to-one basis. Additionally, comment cards were made available for attendees to leave feedback.

## **DISTRICT 1**

In Council District 1, staff recommended three potential dog park locations:

1. Englewood Park (Englewood Road & N Troost Ave.), sited at the southern portion of the park, east of the lake
2. Hodge Park (7000 NE Barry Rd.) and
3. Hidden Valley Park (NE Russell Rd. & N. Bennington Ave.), sited west of Bennington Road.

Approximately 20 people attended the meeting, registering 16 comments. By far the strongest support was indicated for Englewood Park, with over half the comments expressing a desire to see the dog park located there. At Englewood, there were concerns expressed with regards to parking. Comments about Englewood Park also concerned whether some portion of the pond located at the site could be made available for water play for dogs, or alternately, whether the presence of the dogs would create problems for the ponds current use for fishing. Also present at the meetings for Districts 1 and 2, were representatives of Bones 4 Dogs, a dog park advocacy group focused on north of the river dog park development.

Although positive comments were made about sites at Hidden Valley Park and Hodge Park, due to the strong support, Staff recommends Englewood Park. This park was also recommended as a proposed location of the Dog Park Task Force Committee.

## **DISTRICT 2**

For District 2, two parks were recommended by staff for consideration.

1. Vaydik Park (NW 56<sup>th</sup> St. & NW Waukomis Dr.), sited south of the Line Creek Community Center, within the Nature First Area and
2. Tiffany Springs Park (NW 88<sup>th</sup> St. & N Hampton Rd.), sited north of the soccer fields.

The strong public response at this district meeting indicated an organized and heart-felt opposition to one of the recommended locations. Over 30 people, including Councilman Russ Johnson, were in attendance and many of them were members of the National Center for Indigenous American Cultures (NCIAC) and were there to advocate for the protected Native American preserve in Vaydik Park. Because of the historical and cultural significance of areas of the park, there was significant opposition to any development at Vaydik. In all, there were 19 registered comments at the hearing, a resolution passed by the NCIAC, and an additional seven comments sent via e-mail. The vast majority of the comments were opposed to the Vaydik location. Some of the positive comments regarded dog parks in general in the Northland, and did not insist that Vaydik was the only appropriate location. Due to comments received supporting the Tiffany Springs location the site location was

modified to be in a more visible portion of the park. Further, it was acknowledged as preferred to the Vaydik park option.

Due to the strong opposition to Vaydik, Staff recommendation is for Tiffany Springs Park, west of N. Hampton Rd.

### **DISTRICT 3**

In District 3, Blue Valley was the only recommendation made by staff. This park (E 23<sup>rd</sup> St. & Topping Ave.) sited in the Heritage fountain vicinity.

The hearing was poorly attended by residents, although Councilwoman Curls did stop by to review the information and discuss the situation with the few attendees. The main concern expressed by residents was toward keeping the fence from being stolen. The meeting indicated that while there was no significant opposition to the park, there was also no actual support.

Councilwoman Curls offered to bring some of the information from the meeting up at the next scheduled 3<sup>rd</sup> district meeting. Based upon the apparent lack of interest she felt that District 3 residents may have other priorities for PIAC dollar use. Based on these circumstances, Staff recommends foregoing a dog park in this district until such time as community support for one is indicated.

### **DISTRICT 4**

For the District 4 recommendation, there was recognition that the currently existing dog park at Penn Valley is actually in District 4. In exploring a more southerly location in the district, staff recommended South Oak Park (western half at 83<sup>rd</sup> and Indiana).

This hearing was heavily attended with 31 attendees. Nearly all who attended left a comment, with 27 total, plus an additional four sent via e-mail. There was strong majority support for the South Oak site. Some comments contained concerns about Oak Park, including issues with parking, stream runoff, and underbrush removal. Although some members from an advocacy group, WOOF (which stands for Well Organized Of-Leash Friends) were in attendance and left comments voicing their support for Sunnyside Park, they were a noted minority. Additionally, despite the fact that Sunnyside was not a staff recommendation, several comments made critical notes regarding any proposal to put a dog park there. There were also several positive comments regarding the general layout and format of the hearing.

Staff recommends the dog park be placed in South Oak park, on the western half.

## **DISTRICT 5**

Because District 5 contains the City's most significant regional park, Staff recommendations for dog park locations were all within Swope Park (Meyer Blvd. & Swope Parkway), but included various locations within the park. The locations within Swope were:

- Site A located between the Southeast Community Center and the tennis courts near Starlight Drive
- Site B located at the corner of 67th Street and Cleveland.
- Site C located south of the zoo parking lot & north of district 3 headquarters
- Site D located on Lewis Road near the cricket field
- Site E located near the Nursery off of Gregory Rd.
- Site F located west of Lewis Road

The meeting included 14 attendees with 11 comments left, plus one sent via e-mail. In general, the most support was found for sites A (Starlight Drive) and E (by the nursery). The general consensus seemed to be that site A was in a more populated portion of the park, with more lighting, parking, and foot traffic, which created for some an additional perception of safety. Site E has more potential for expansion, as well as ready access to water, electricity, parking and thoroughfare accessibility. Additionally, site E is the more non-disruptive site with no public programmed activities at the site.

**Staff recommendation is site E in Swope Park. The Dog Park Task Force Committee also recommended Swope Park as a proposed dog park site.**

## **DISTRICT 6**

District 6 contained three parks recommended by staff as appropriate for a dog park amenity:

1. Blue River Athletic Fields (South loop I-435 & Prospect Ave.), sited at the north portion of the park, east of the pond,
2. Jerry Smith Park (E. 135<sup>th</sup> St. & Prospect Ave.), sited southwest of the barn, and
3. Minor Park (Red Bridge Rd. & Holmes Rd.).

Fourteen people, including Councilman John Sharp, attended the hearing , in addition to hosting our first and only dog. Comments were generally very positive with almost universal support for Minor Park.

**Staff recommends Minor Park. The Dog Park Task Force Committee also recommended Minor Park as a proposed dog park.**

## GREATER DOWNTOWN

For the downtown area, staff considerations for park design were slightly different. Instead of a 5-acre off-leash dog park, there were two considerations for a 1-acre off-leash area in existing parks:

1. West Terrace (West Bluff, from W 6<sup>th</sup> to W 17<sup>th</sup> St.) sited across from State Street, and
2. Mulkey Square Park (W 13<sup>th</sup> St. & Summit St.) sited at the west portion of the park, away from the volleyball and baseball fields.

Twenty six people attended in total and left 21 comments. This meeting had some organized opposition from the residential community nearby against the use of Mulkey Park. Most of the opposition to Mulkey stemmed from the fact that it is already a highly used, heavily trafficked park, and that adding more amenities would cause additional problems with parking and scheduling. In fact, based on the comments, there was not a single person in support of Mulkey, though there were a few comments in support of Downtown off-leash areas in general. West Terrace also had a good amount of support from loft and apartment residents, in proximity to the park.

Staff recommendation is West Terrace. The Dog Park Task Force Committee also recommended West Terrace Park as a proposed dog park.

## RULES

At every hearing, in addition to displays depicting photos and maps of the parks, there was a display listing the proposed rules for the dog parks. Comments were invited on the rules as well. Generally, the rules as proposed were well received. However, a few concerns came up multiple times.

One frequently discussed rule was the proposal to limit the number of dogs allowed per handler. Rule #3 states: "There is a maximum of two (2) dogs per adult handler". Many people brought up the point that city ordinance allows for up to four dogs in a home, and that as long as the dogs are controllable, they should be allowed.

Based on this feedback, staff recommends that rule #3 be changed to allow up to four dogs (4) to accompany any single adult handler.

There were also numerous concerns raised about rule #6, which states that "children 8 years and under are not allowed in the off-leash dog area; children ages 9-15 must be accompanied by an adult. An adult handler is considered anyone over 16 years of age".

Many expressed a desire to be able to take the whole family with them to the park and make it a family event. The "no children under 8 years old" rule was perceived as making this impossible, requiring the hiring of a babysitter in order to facilitate taking a dog to the park. Some recommended the inclusion of a liability clause in the

rules, a kind of “bring children in at your own risk” stipulation, rather than ruling out young children entirely.

However, staff continues to feel strongly that young children should be prohibited from dog park use. Staff, as park professionals, makes decisions every day to insure that the users of park property may do so as safely as possible. Based on safety information, when playground equipment is installed, efforts are made to insure that the youngest children can safely play on some equipment, although other equipment may be appropriate for older children. We trust parents and other adults to provide supervision at all park amenities, yet we take extra measures for even wading pools and certain other water features. Staff is aware that there is not one nationally accepted dog park standard regarding this issue. We found instances where children are allowed in at any age, and others where young children are restricted from dog park enclosures. We have followed accepted wisdom by including separate fencing areas for small dogs in order to provide additional protection for them from larger dogs. Staff feels comfortable providing an additional measure of protection to the youngest human users of our parks by prohibiting their inclusion within dog park fences.

Staff recommends that rule #6 remain.

## CONCLUSION

Staff recommends that the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners encourage the allocation and use of both public and private funds to include a dog park amenity in the following locations:

District 1: Englewood Park

District 2: Tiffany Springs Park

District 3: Staff recommends foregoing a dog park in this district until such time as community support for one is indicated.

District 4: South Oak park, on the west side

District 5: Swope Park, Site E

District 6: Minor Park

Downtown: West Terrace Park

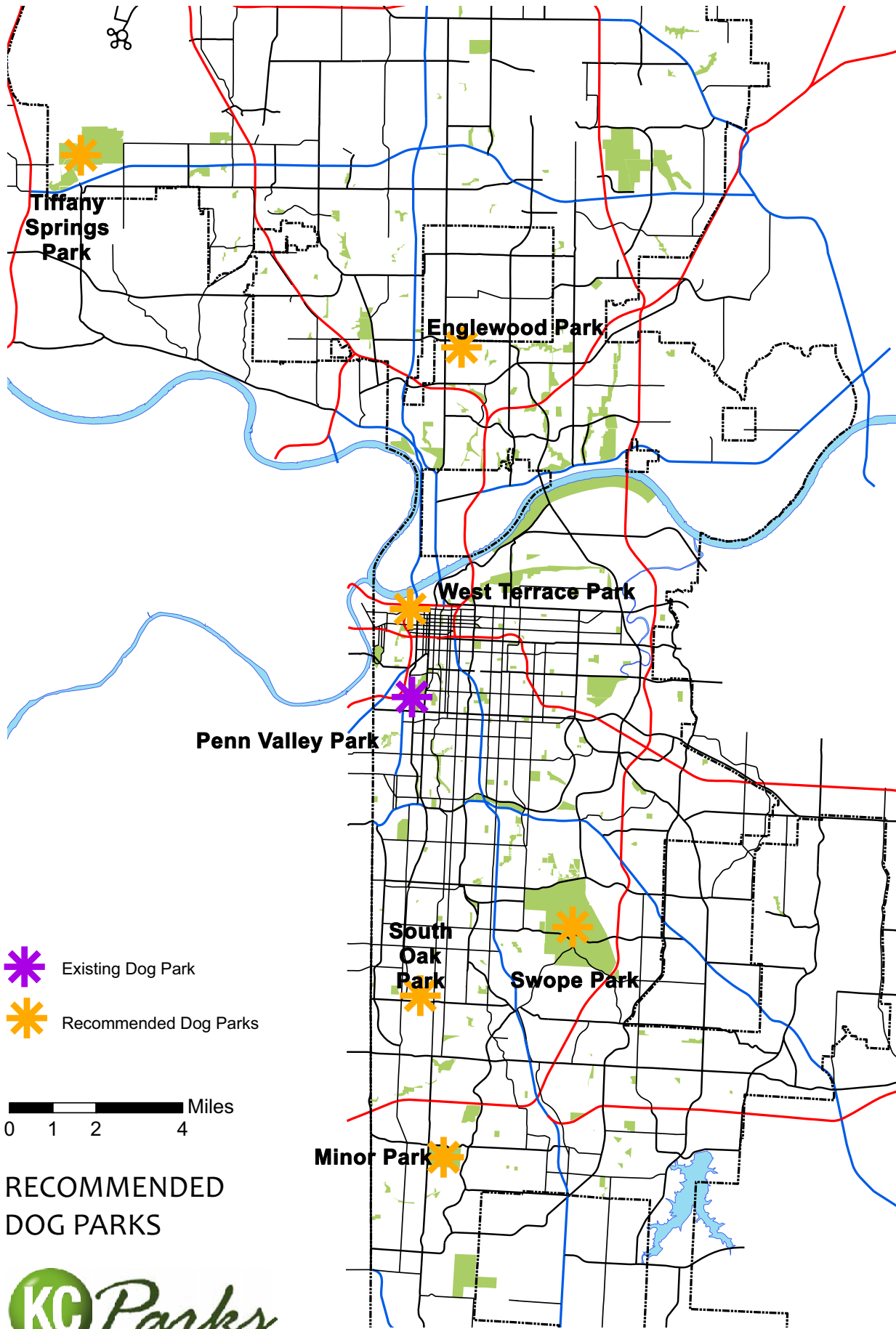
Staff further recommends that the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners adopt the following rules to be followed by users of the dog parks:



1. Handlers enter off-leash area at their own risk.
2. Handlers must clean up after their dogs and dispose of all trash.
3. Dogs may never be left unattended and must be under voice control at all times. There is a maximum of four (4) dogs per adult handler.

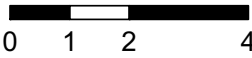


4. Owners are responsible legally and financially for the actions of their dogs. Aggressive dogs should not be brought into the area, and any dog must be removed immediately if aggressive behavior is noted.
5. Dogs must be healthy and free of parasites, properly licensed, vaccinated, and not in heat. No puppies under four months old are allowed.
6. Children 8 years and under are not allowed in the off-leash dog area; children ages 9 – 15 must be accompanied by an adult. An adult handler is considered anyone over 16 years of age.
7. Dogs must be leashed when outside of the fenced area. Handler should have the leash in hand when inside of the area.
8. No human food is permitted in the fenced/off-leash area. Handlers using dog treats must assume the risk of safe handling.
9. Prong, choke and spike collars must be removed for safety reasons.
10. Handlers are subject to all applicable city ordinances.

Staff further recommends an annual evaluation to commence within the first year after each identified site has been constructed.

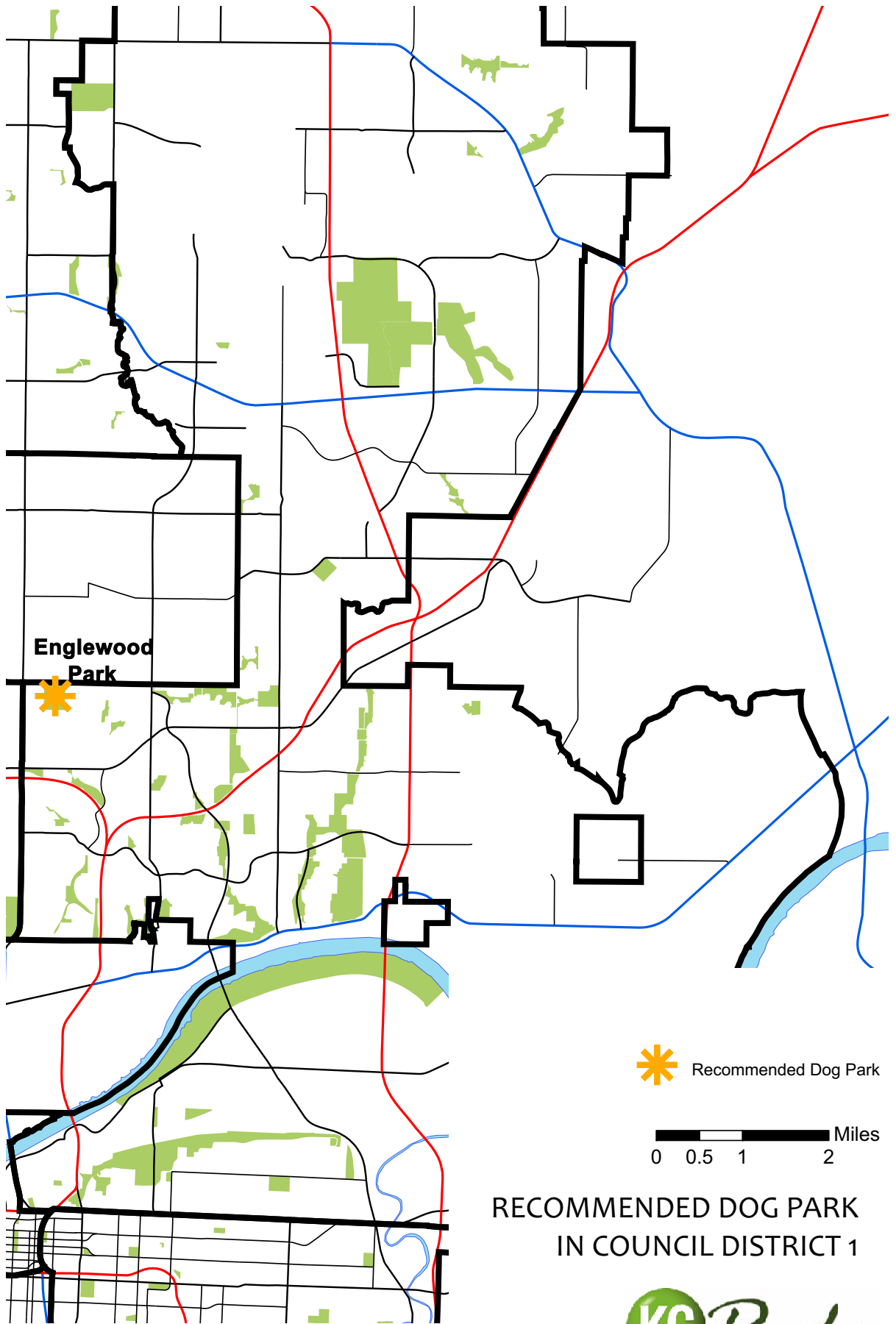


-  Existing Dog Park
-  Recommended Dog Parks


 Miles

**RECOMMENDED  
DOG PARKS**





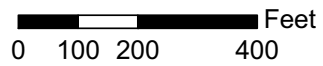
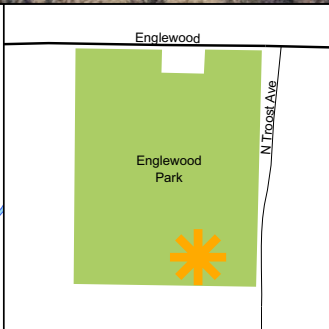
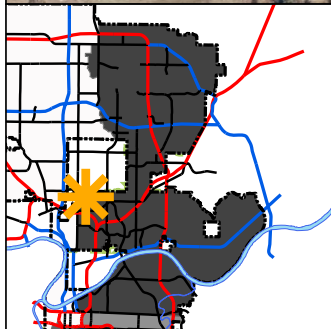
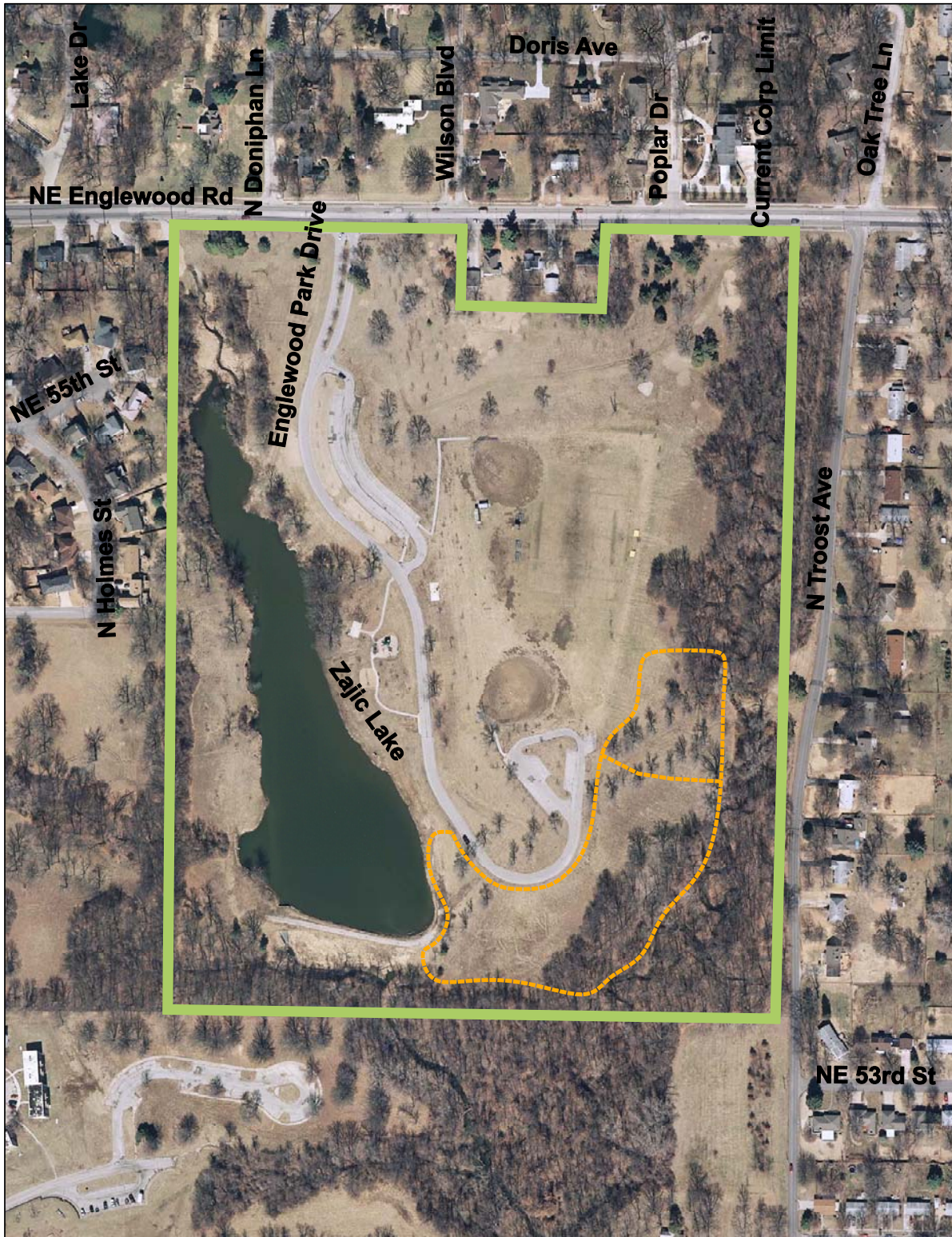
Englewood  
Park

 Recommended Dog Park

 Miles  
0 0.5 1 2

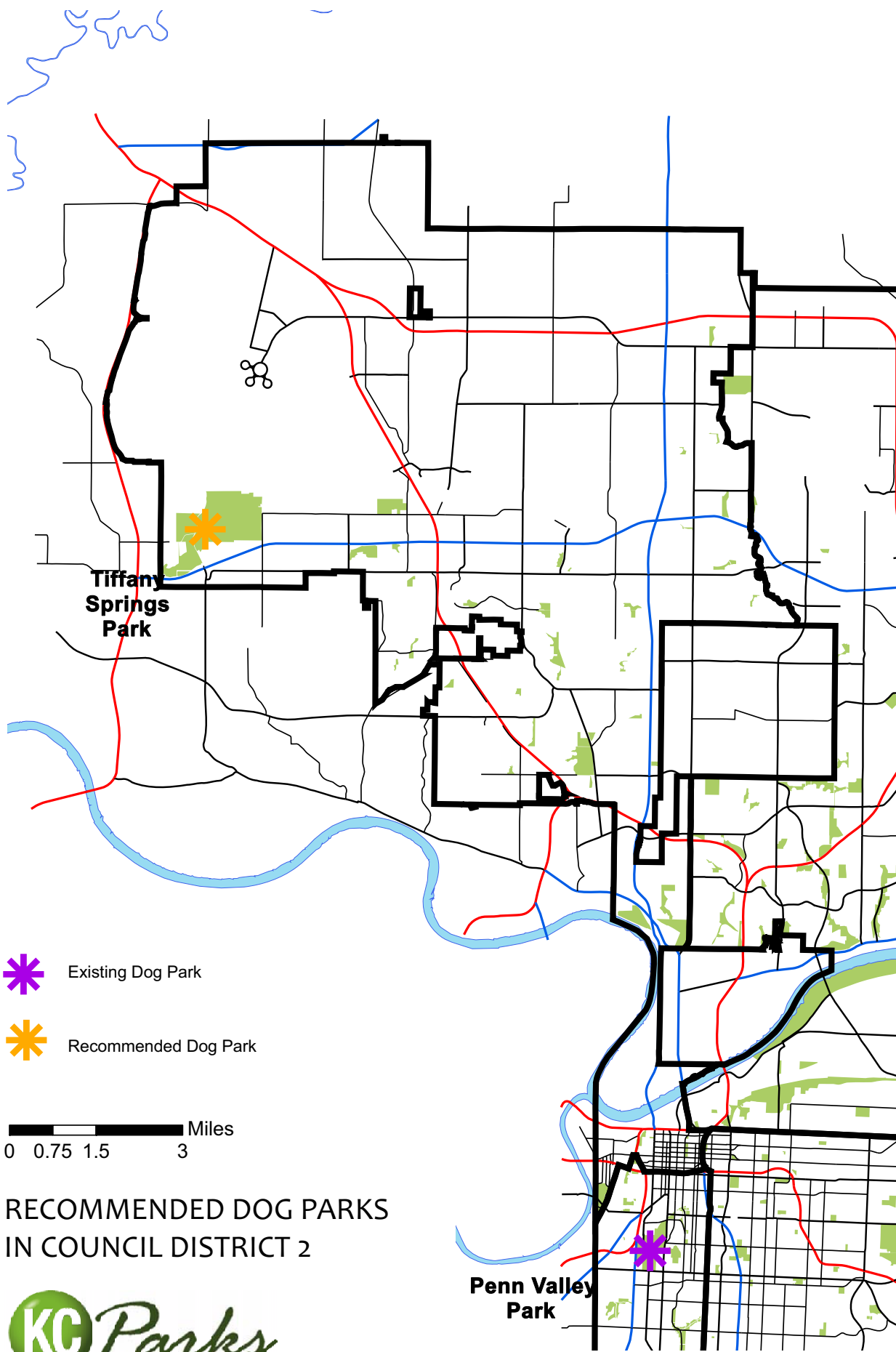
### RECOMMENDED DOG PARK IN COUNCIL DISTRICT 1







RECOMMENDED DOG PARK  
IN ENGLEWOOD PARK





-  Existing Dog Park
-  Recommended Dog Park

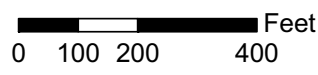
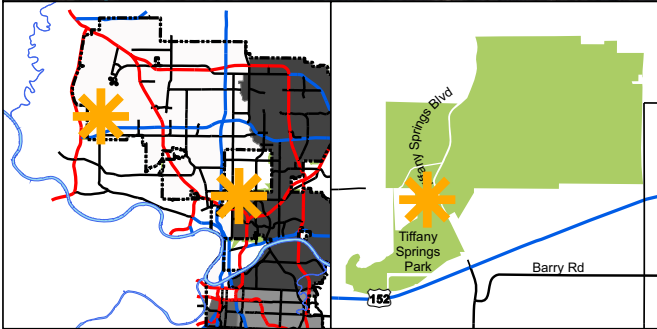
0 0.75 1.5 3 Miles

RECOMMENDED DOG PARKS  
IN COUNCIL DISTRICT 2



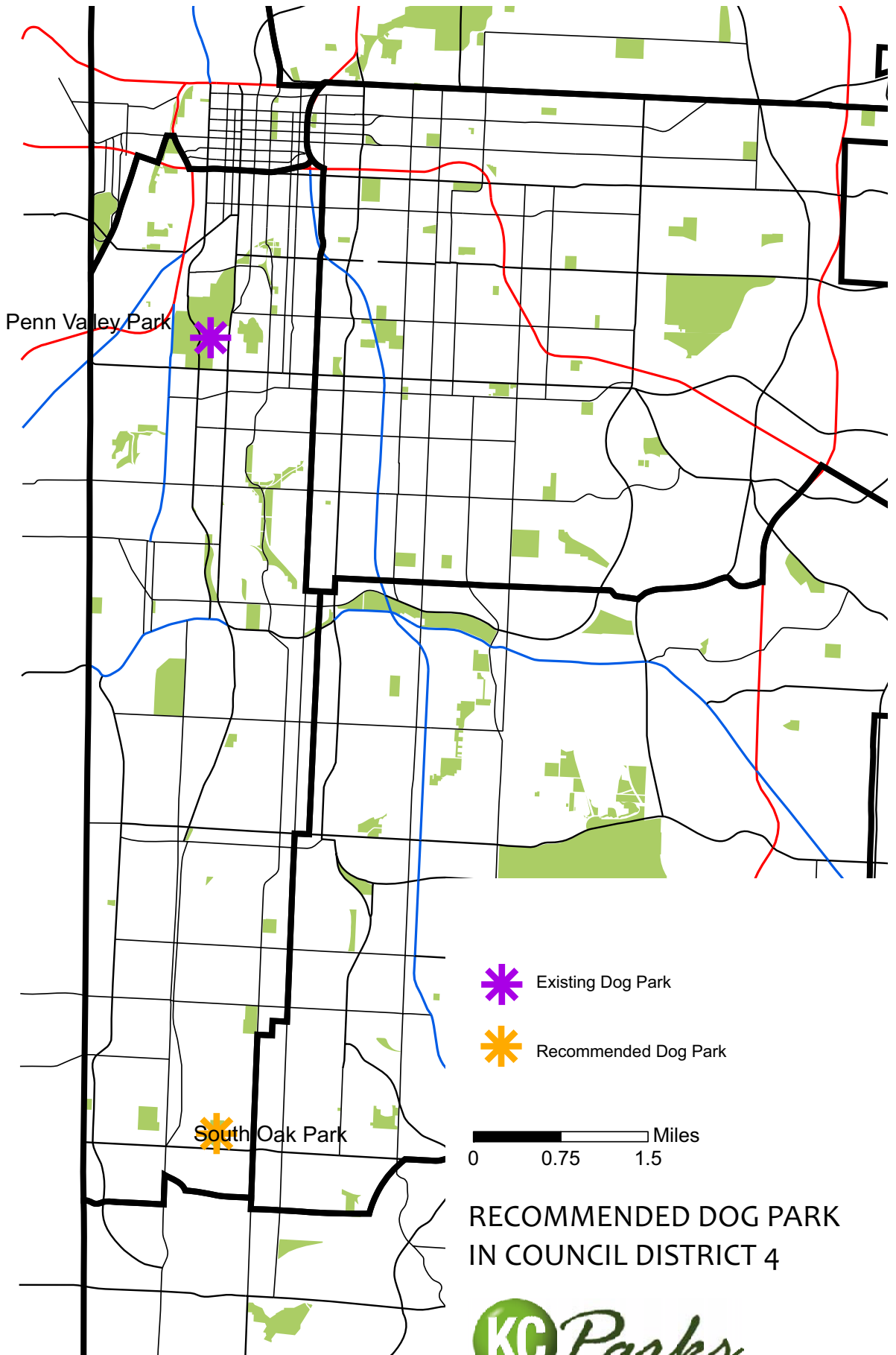
**Penn Valley  
Park**

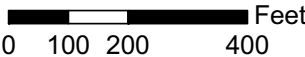
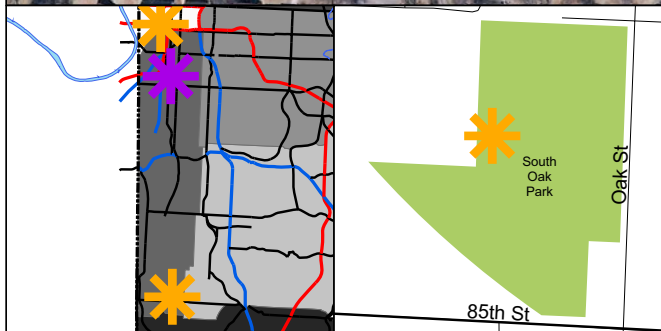
**Tiffany  
Springs  
Park**



RECOMMENDED DOG PARK  
IN TIFFANY SPRINGS PARK



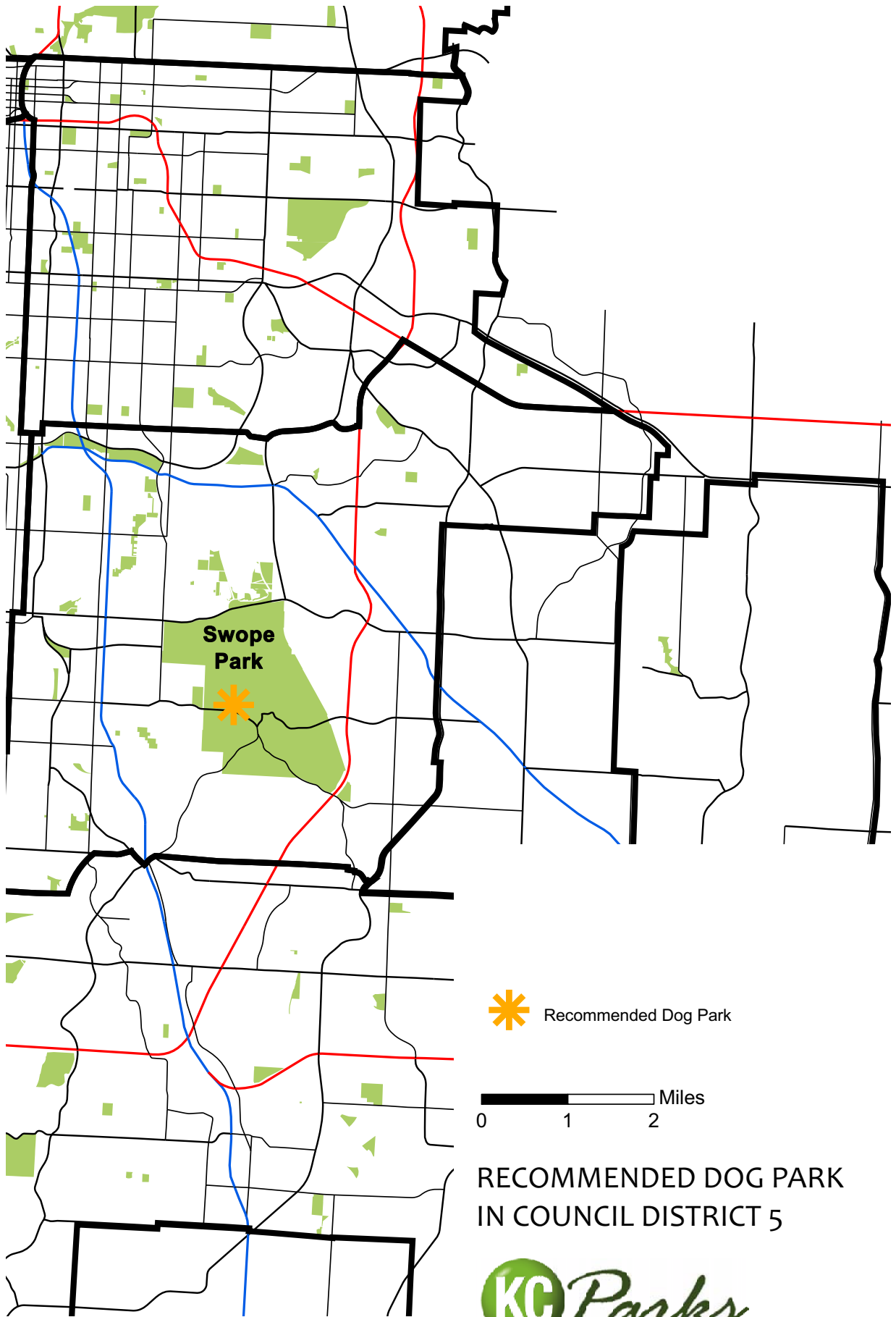




**RECOMMENDED DOG PARK  
 IN SOUTH OAK PARK**

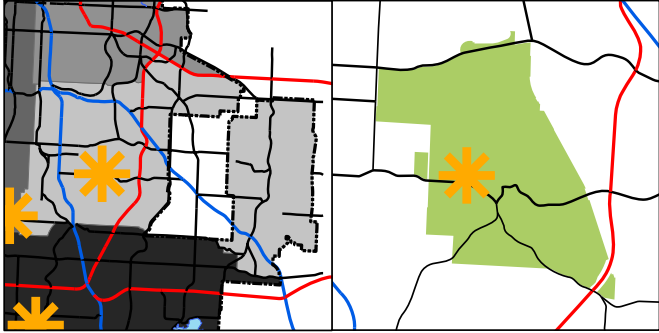






RECOMMENDED DOG PARK  
IN COUNCIL DISTRICT 5

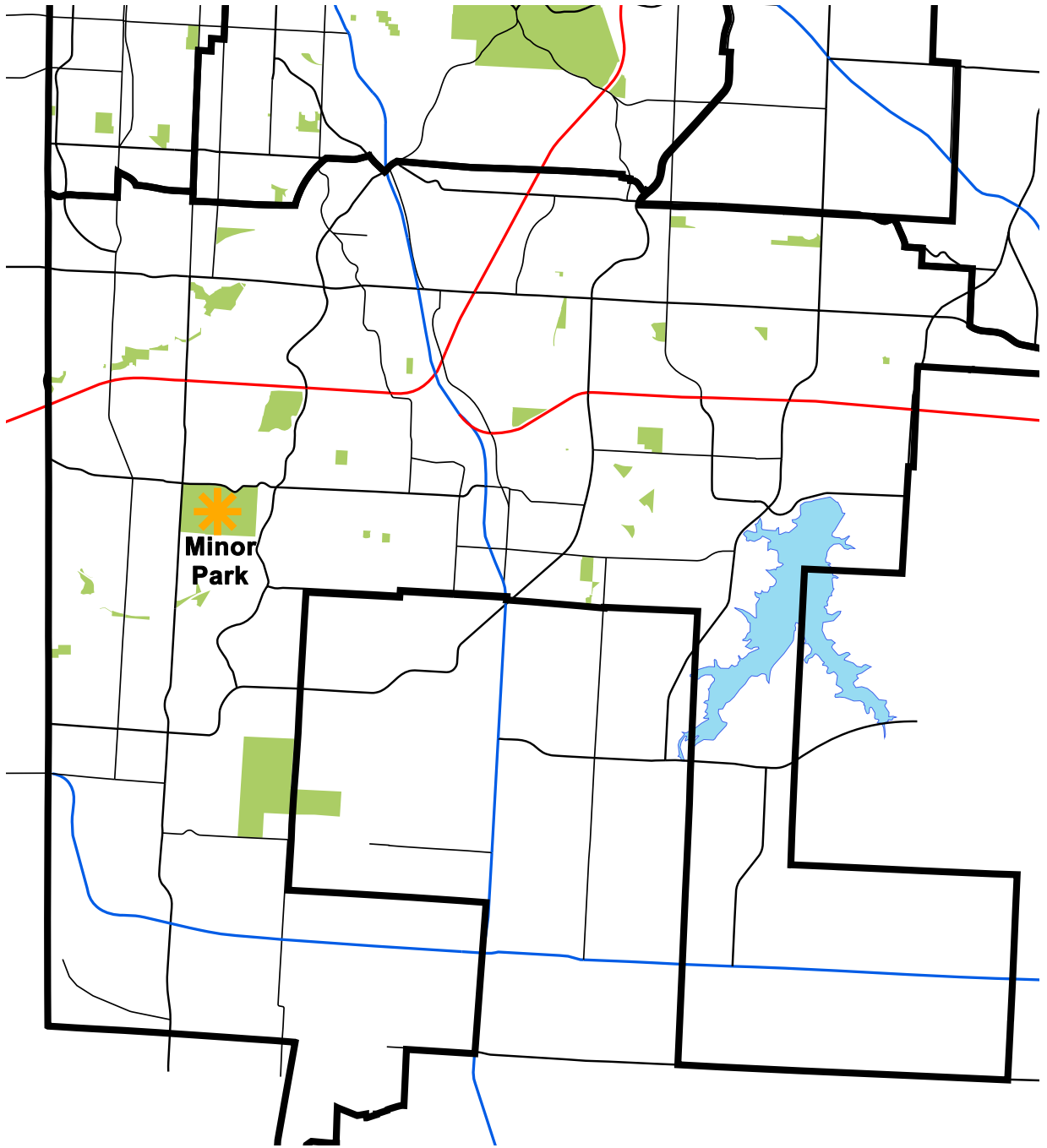





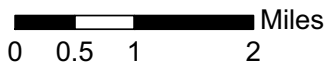
0 100 200 400 Feet

RECOMMENDED DOG PARK  
IN SWOPE PARK



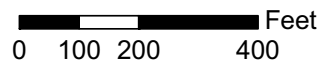
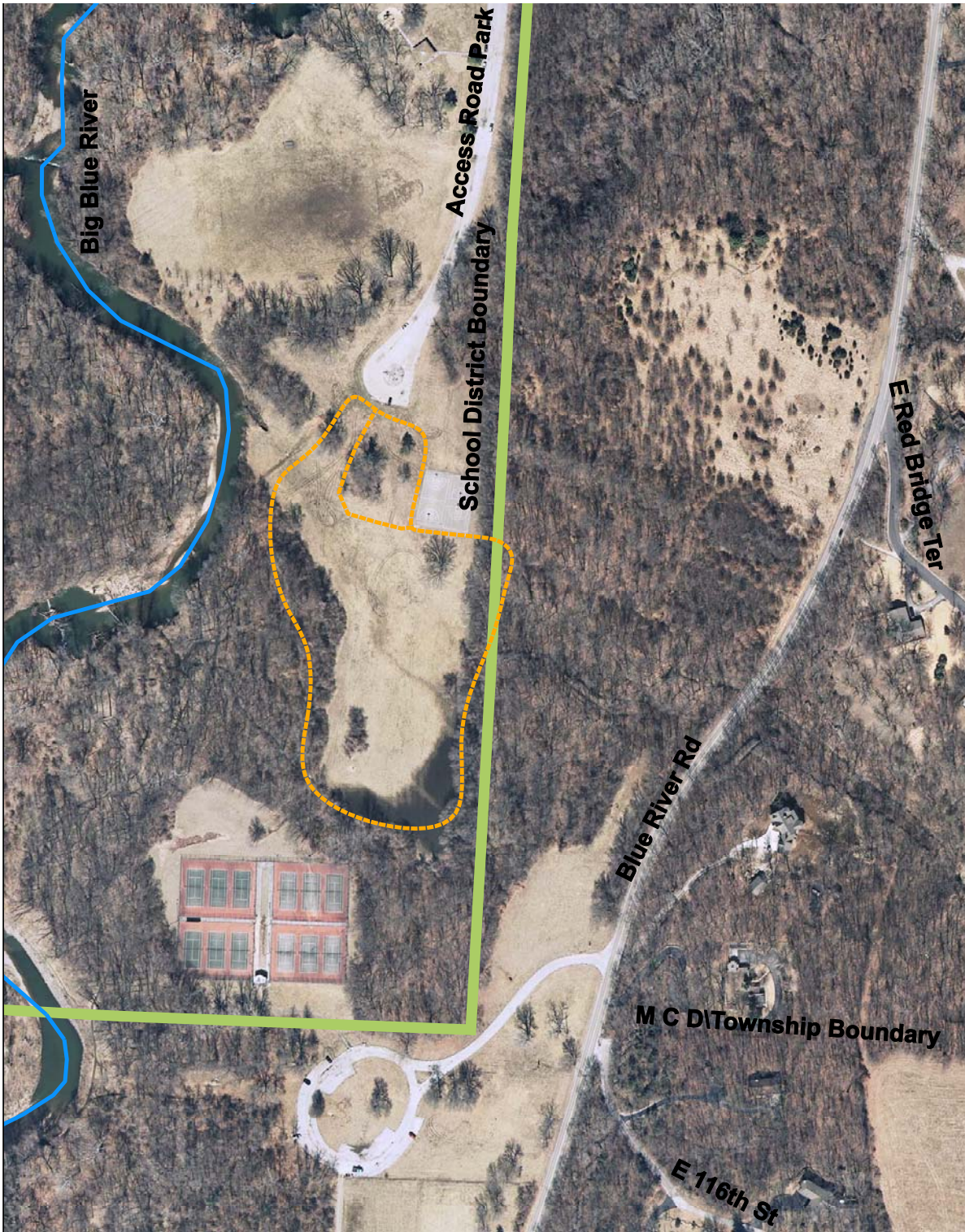


 Recommended Dog Park



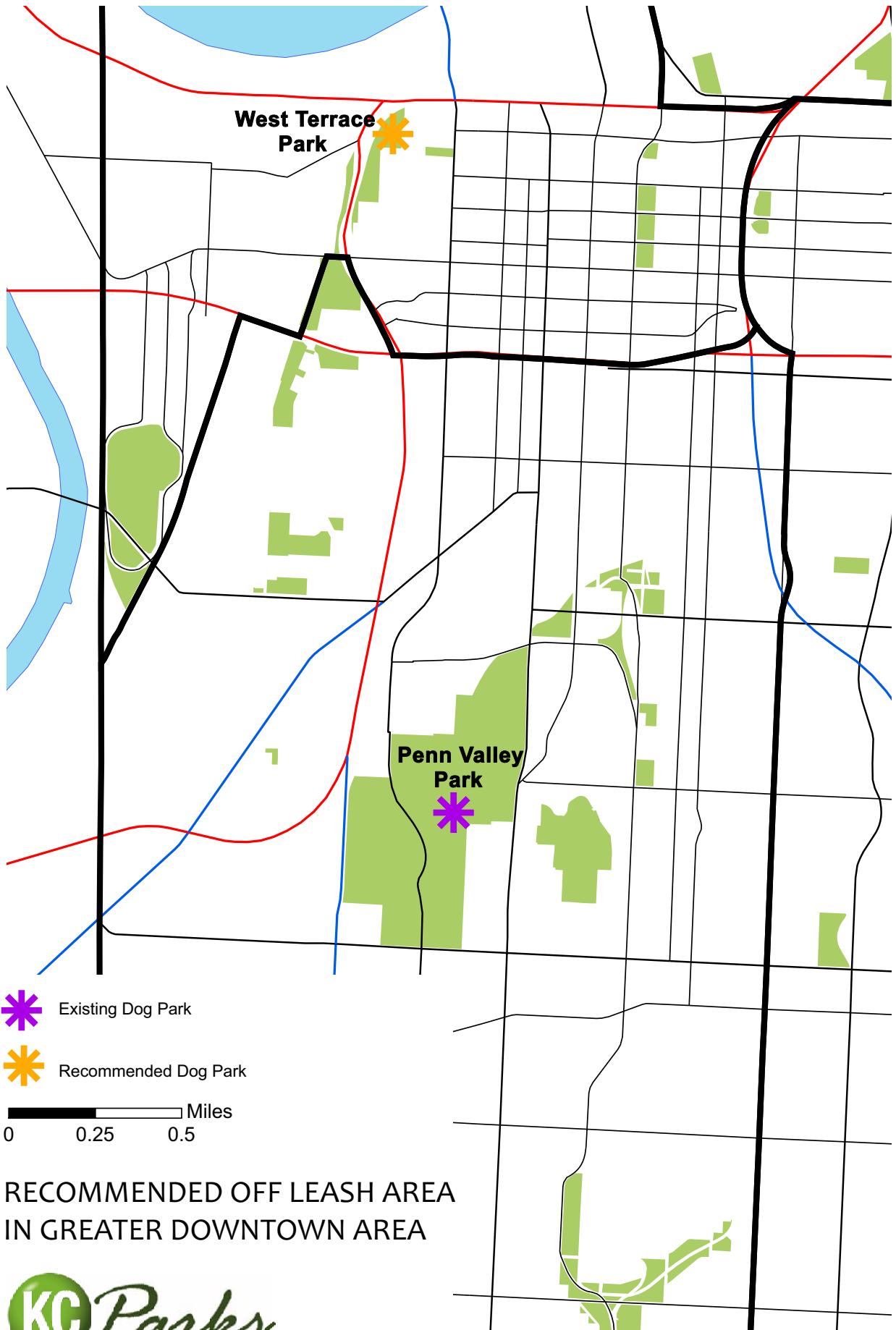
## RECOMMENDED DOG PARK IN COUNCIL DISTRICT 6







RECOMMENDED DOG PARK  
IN MINOR PARK





**West Terrace  
Park**

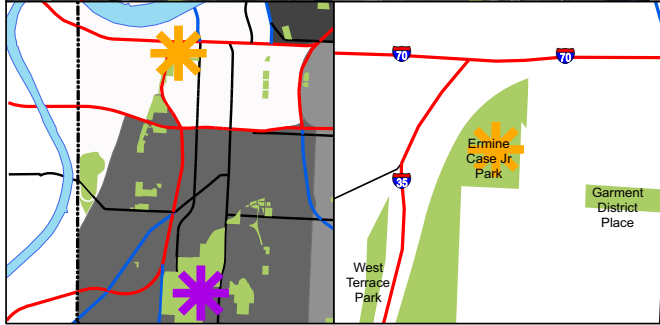
**Penn Valley  
Park**

-  Existing Dog Park
-  Recommended Dog Park

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

**RECOMMENDED OFF LEASH AREA  
IN GREATER DOWNTOWN AREA**





0 50 100 200 Feet

RECOMMENDED  
OFF LEASH AREA  
IN WEST TERRACE PARK



